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REMARKS

Claims 1-55 were originally presented in the subject application. The final Office Action allowed claims 7-11, 25-29 and 44-48. Claims 1, 5, 12, 19, 23, 30, 38, 42 and 49 have herein been amended, and claims 3, 4, 21, 22, 37, 40 and 41 canceled without prejudice. No claims have herein been added. Therefore, claims 1, 2, 5-20, 23-36, 38, 39 and 41-55 remain in this case.

The addition of new matter has been scrupulously avoided. In that regard, all claim amendments herein cancel existing claims without prejudice, make independent a previously dependent claim, or move existing dependent claim limitations into their respective independent claims. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants respectfully request entry of this amendment, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the grounds of rejection.

35 U.S.C. §102 Rejection

The Office Action rejected claim 37 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e), as allegedly anticipated by Muller et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,606,301).

In light of the amendments herein, Applicants submit this rejection is now moot.

35 U.S.C. §103 Rejection

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 21, 23, 24, 38, 39, 40, 42 and 43 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), as allegedly obvious over Muller et al. in view of Yamada (U.S. Patent No. 5,455,820).

In light of the amendments herein, Applicants submit this rejection is also now moot.

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Objection to Claims

The final Office Action allowed claims 7-11, 25-29 and 44-48, and objected to claims 4, 12-17, 22, 30-35, 41 and 49-54 as depending from rejected base claims. However, the final Office Action also indicated that the claims objected to would be allowable if amended in independent form, including all of the limitations of the relevant base claim and any intervening claims.

In response, Applicants have amended the claims as detailed below to take the subject matter indicated as allowed/allowable. However, Applicants expressly retain the right to file a continuing application to pursue the rejected claims.

In particular, claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations of claims 3 and 4, claims 3 and 4 have been canceled without prejudice, and claim 5 has been amended to depend from claim 1 instead of claim 3. In addition, claim 18 depends from claim 1. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 1, 2, 5, 6 and 18 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 12 has been amended in independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 1, from which it depended. Claims 13-17 already depended directly or ultimately from claim 12. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 12-17 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 19 has been amended to include the limitations of claims 21 and 22, claims 21 and 22 have been canceled without prejudice, and claim 23 has been amended to depend from claim 19 instead of claim 21. In addition, claim 36 depends from claim 19. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 19, 20, 23, 24 and 36 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 30 has been amended in independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 19, from which it depended. Claims 31-35 already depended directly or ultimately from claim 30. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 30-35 are now in condition for allowance.

Claim 38 has been amended to include the limitations of claims 40 and 41, claims 40 and 41 have been canceled without prejudice, and claim 42 has been amended to depend

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from claim 38 instead of claim 40. In addition, claim 55 depends from claim 38. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 38, 39, 42, 43 and 55 are now in condition for allowance.

Finally, claim 49 has been amended in independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 38, from which it depended. Claims 50-54 already depended directly or ultimately from claim 49. Thus, Applicants submit that claims 49-54 are now in condition for allowance.

Therefore, Applicants submit that claims 1, 2, 5-20, 23-36, 38, 39 and 41-55 are now in condition for allowance.

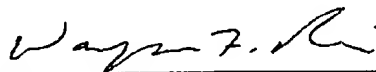
CONCLUSION

Applicants submit that the dependent claims not specifically addressed herein are allowable for the same reasons as the independent claims from which they directly or ultimately depend, as well as for their additional limitations.

For all the above reasons, Applicants maintain that the claims of the subject application define patentable subject matter and earnestly request allowance of claims 1, 2, 5-20, 23-36, 38, 39 and 41-55.

If a telephone conference would be of assistance in advancing prosecution of the subject application, Applicants' undersigned attorney invites the Examiner to telephone him at the number provided.

Respectfully submitted,



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Dated: February 8, 2006.

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